

Responding to a request from an 8-year-old constituent, Congressman Jesse L. Jackson, Jr. today awarded three medals to the boy's 84-year-old grandfather, Army veteran Theodore Sowa Sr.

"It's an overdue honor to present these medals to your grandfather on behalf of you and a grateful nation," Congressman Jackson told young Martin Downs, a third-grader at Keller Regional Gifted School in the Hegewisch community and the grandson of Sowa.

"Because of Martin's steadfastness, we are gathered here today. It's my privilege to fulfill your request as a young constituent," Jackson said during a ceremony at his congressional office.

Then, turning to Martin's grandfather, Jackson said, "Military service is one of the high callings a civilian can undertake. Thank you for your service. I am proud to be part of this wonderful occasion to recognize your family."

Young Martin told the Congressman that his search for his grandfather's medals began with a school assignment.

"My grandfather told me many times about the medals he won but never received," Martin said. When Keller School recently sponsored a "Young Author's Contest," Martin recounted the story of grandfather's missing medals in his story called "A Golden Heart for a Purple Heart." After writing the story, he pursued securing the medals through Jackson, who subsequently obtained them from the Army.

Mr. Sowa, whose family emigrated from Poland, served in the Army's Chemical Mortar Battalion from July 1942 to October 1945. He fought in both the European-African and Middle Eastern theaters. After the war, Mr. Sowa worked for several Chicago companies before taking a job at Republic Steel, where he worked until his retirement.

"The good conduct medal is the best of them all," said Sowa, of 13434 South Avenue N.